

NSC BRIEFING

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LAOS

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AUTH: 111111
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- I. Laos again becoming focal point of tension in Southeast Asia.
 - A. Conflicting French-US-Laotian policy objectives, difficulties in integrating former Communist dissidents into army and threatening bloc statements combine to increase instability.
- II. Sad state of 25,000-man Laotian army, the principal anti-Communist instrument, has long seriously concerned US country team.
 - A. Disciplined force needed for internal security and to undercut basis of Communist appeal through rural aid and public works.
 - B. Under 300-man French training mission--provided for in 1954 Geneva agreements--army's capabilities steadily declined to point where basic military skills lacking.
- III. A US plan for a "crash" training program to supplement French effort by introducing 12 mixed French-US mobile training teams has hit snags.
 - A. French, [REDACTED] strongly resisting surrender of exclusive control over training.
- IV. US-French talks scheduled open Paris 25 May but these now being rendered academic by Laos' insistence France in effect get out.
[REDACTED]
- V. Laos' objectives are to assert sovereignty and secure firm US guarantees of its security in return for its open pro-West position.
 - A. Lao Foreign Minister on 15 May implied that US failure to support Laos might lead Laos follow Cambodia and establish diplo relations with Communist China.

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- VI. Since last December the Communist bloc has maintained propaganda and frontier pressures on Laos to check its drift toward West.
- VII. Last week's rebellion of two former Communist dissident battalions who refused integration into Laotian Army, and the simultaneous house arrest of top former Communist leaders, added new fuel to Communist campaign for return of ICC, which favors Commie interests.
- A. One battalion has now surrendered but mos of other has fled to bush.
- B. This mutiny may provoke further repressive steps against the Laotian Communist leaders.
- VIII. Hanoi 17 May requested Indian Chairman to reconvene ICC stating "alarming developments in Laos" were "fraught with the most dangerous possibilities."
- A. On 18 May, Peiping supported this request in menacing statement which threatened possibility of "civil war" in Laos.

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